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Solar Energy's Future: Games the AEC Plays

Of the criticisms directed against the Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor (LMFBR) program, one in particular has stung the AEC—the accusation by the Scientists' Institute for Public Information (SIPI) and its chairman, Barry Commoner, that the AEC has deliberately made misleading statements about the potential for solar energy in order to justify proceeding with the nuclear program.

The charge provoked an angry response from AEC Chairman Dixy Lee Ray, who labelled it "totally false" in a statement last month, and it has brought similar responses from other nuclear energy advocates.

It is not difficult to see why Commoner's charges have evoked such reactions, for they cut into the most basic justification that the Administration has been making for its unswerving commitment to the LMFBR as the prime source of electrical energy for the 1990s and beyond.

Commoner claims that solar energy technology could be developed to supply more than a fifth of the nation's electrical output by the end of the century, and that the AEC has in its possession an authoritative report which backs up such a prediction. The AEC, he says, has suppressed the report because it undermines the case for the LMFBR.

The nub of the dispute is a draft environmental impact statement published by the AEC on March 15, which will be put into final form by mid-June.

(Continued on page 2.)

Postscript to Energy Planning

Some measure of the frenzy that characterized the Administration's creation of an energy R&D masterplan late last year is revealed in the minutes of a recent meeting of the Department of Commerce Technical Advisory Board, where Gilbert S. Omenn, an assistant to AEC Chairlady Dixy Lee Ray, head of the study, was asked how priorities were determined.

According to the minutes: "Dr. Omenn noted that an attempt was made to apply carefully reasoned criteria but it turned out that the need was so great that money had to be allocated to all possible areas. In most cases, as much money was allocated as it was thought could be reasonably absorbed. In some cases—solar and geothermal—even more than probably can be absorbed."

The minutes go on to report that Betsy Ancker-Johnson, assistant secretary of Commerce for science and technology, "noted that she was very disturbed by the lack of information available. . . in terms of the incremental energy that each technology can yield as a function of investment. Dr. Omenn emphasized that the total picture had not been looked at—only the technical aspects; e.g., no consideration was given to availability of hydrogen for coal conversion, and bottlenecks such as vessels, railcars, etc."

In Brief

The anti-nuclear power movement has gained so much momentum that few expect the clamor to be dampened by what is intended to be the definitive study of reactor accident probabilities, least of all the head of the study, Norman Rasmussen, MIT professor of nuclear engineering. The study, due this summer, "will yield numbers that will be violently attacked by critics, but which I am prepared to defend. . ." Rasmussen recently said. A psychological burden on the study is that it is financed by the AEC, an arrangement that even friends of nuclear power now regard as unfortunate.

Creation of a $5-million-year public relations fund, drawn from assessments on members of the American Institute of Physics, was stoutly recommended two years ago in that 1000-page pitch for more money for physics, Physics in Perspective, published by the National Academy of Sciences. The suggestion, however, has disappeared without a ripple, and among the most thankful are some members of the AIP staff who didn't relish the idea of handling a multi-million-dollar fund for selling physics while physicists are appealing to Congress for more money for research.

The average time required for final action on a patent application hit a half-century low last year—24 months, but the Patent Office, even after an unsuccessful stab at computerizing its operations, feels that by expanding its use of relatively simple data handling techniques, it can get the figure down to 18 months within two years. Meanwhile, however, the average time for settling appeals of patent decisions is on the rise, from eight to 12 months over the past two years, with "pendency" expected to average 14 months next year.

New Rules Sharply Reduce Scientific "Brain Drain"

The American-bound "brain drain" of foreign scientists and engineers went down sharply last year, apparently in response to tightness in the US job market, but the well-established pattern of foreign physicians streaming to these shores continued at near-record levels, according to a report by NSF.

In the year ending last June 30, some 6600 scientists and engineers acquired alien resident status here, compared with annual totals ranging between 10,300 and 13,300 during the preceding five years. The figures for physicians, however, were about 7100 last year and the year before—the highest levels on record for this professional category.

The decline in scientific and engineering arrivals, and the continued high levels of medical immigration, are simply explained. Regulations that went into effect in July 1973 specified that a professionally qualified immigrant must provide proof that a job awaits him before he is admitted. With jobs relatively hard to come by in science and engineering at that time, a lot of would-be immigrants were denied entry. But since the US hospital system heavily depends on foreign physicians, those interested in coming here had no difficulty lining up jobs beforehand.

These and other details concerning immigration of scientists, engineers, and physicians are contained in a brief report, NSF 73-302, available without charge from the Division of Science Resource Studies, NSF, 1800 G St. NW., Wash., D.C.

(Continued from page 1.)

The statement, a four-volume document, sets out a case for the LMFBR largely on the grounds that it will be providing so much energy by the end of the century that there is no other technology on the horizon which seems capable of filling the gap.

It was SIPI which forced the AEC to produce the impact statement in the first place, by successfully arguing in federal court that the AEC is legally obliged to provide an environmental assessment of the impact of the breeder reactor program before it built the first prototype reactor. And it is SIPI which has been in the front line in denouncing the draft statement as inadequate.

At a press conference in Washington in mid-April, Commoner charged that because the impact statement is essentially a public relations exercise aimed at justifying the LMFBR, rather than analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of the program, it is "an affront to the nation's environmental law, to the courts, and to the people of the US, whom the AEC is bound by its duty to serve."

In forcing the AEC to provide an environmental impact statement on the LMFBR program, SIPI intended to publicize the fact that if a decision is made to embark on development of the LMFBR, the United States will be locked into an energy policy which will inevitably rely on nuclear reactors as the main source of energy production. Alternatively, Commoner maintains that by embarking instead on a program of aggressive development of solar energy technology, "the proposed breeder program is unnecessary and could be abandoned at once without impairing our ability to meet projected demand for electricity."

Commoner's optimistic prediction is based on the report of a subpanel of solar energy experts who put together a possible solar energy development program to assist Dixy Lee Ray in drawing up recommendations for a national energy research and development program for President Nixon last year. (SGR Vol III No 22).

The panel said that there are still many technical problems to overcome, but that solar energy could supply 21% of US electrical energy demand by the year 2000, at economically competitive prices. The breeder, by comparison, could supply 23% of energy demand if the more expensive development program goes according to plan.

Commoner claimed, first, that the AEC has suppressed the report. Dixy Lee Ray countered that it's been available for inspection in the AEC's public documents room since she delivered her energy R&D plan to the White House in December.

Commoner then claimed that the AEC's impact statement failed to include an analysis of the report, even though its conclusions are "an essential component of the discussion of alternatives to the breeder program." The omission, Commoner said, "is a gross dereliction of the AEC's duty to the demands of NEPA and the courts."

It should be pointed out that the subpanel's conclusions present a much more rosy picture of solar energy than those of a committee put together by NASA and the National Science Foundation, which reported last year that solar energy could provide perhaps 5% of US electricity demand by the year 2000. Similarly, a report prepared by Mitre Corp. last year predicted that solar energy could supply 8.4—14.7% of electricity demand by the end of the century.

It is difficult, however, to dismiss the charge that the AEC's impact statement presented the worst possible picture for solar energy, and the best possible picture for the breeder reactor. In itself, that constitutes a breach of guidelines set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality, which argued that impact statements should provide "a rigorous explanation and objective evaluation of all reasonable alternative actions."

Public-Interest Groups Seek New Funding

Faced with the likelihood that their biggest single source of funds may dry up in the next few years, public-interest law firms and their backers in the public and private sectors are looking around for alternative finance. But support is proving difficult to come by and the public-interest groups may have a tough time putting their operations on a solid financial footing.

The immediate cause for concern is that the Ford Foundation, which has been pumping millions of dollars into public-interest law groups since 1969, is considering putting its money into other activities. It is not Ford's usual style to bankroll projects for more than a few years, and its possible withdrawal from the field has therefore been anticipated for some time.

But last month two related events helped bring the matter to the forefront. First, Ford announced that it will provide $2.3 million to support the activities of four public-interest law firms at least until the end of 1975. At the same time however, the Foundation warned that its role after those grants expire "cannot be determined now."

The second event was that Ford convened a conference in San Diego, which was attended by representatives of foundations, public-interest groups and professional bar organizations, to discuss more permanent arrangements for financing public law firms.

Although the conference reached no firm conclusions, one proposal was kicked around which, if it could be implemented, would firmly establish public-interest law as a more permanent fixture in national, state and local decision-making.

The idea is to establish a fund, supported by foundation and private groups, to finance the activities of public-interest law firms. Although the idea is still in the formative stage, one possibility is that professional bar organizations would contribute to the fund and the enterprise would be managed by a board of trustees, but so far it's not clear on what basis the money would be distributed.

Since the public-interest law firms first rose to prominence on the Washington landscape during the wave of Nader-inspired consumer awareness and the rising tide of environmental concern in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they have become a potent force in regulatory decision-making and in the formulation of social policies. It is therefore unlikely that they would be allowed to expire or be forced to curtail their activities if Ford does decide to put its money into other fields. Ford officials also privately concede that they wouldn't pull the rug from under public-interest law firms until other sources of funding have been worked out.

Another possibility is that the law firms may be awarded legal fees when they successfully bring cases against government agencies. But the problem at present is that the Internal Revenue Service has not issued guidelines to cover the acceptance of fees by tax-exempt organisations, and although the Natural Resources Defense Council, for example, has been awarded fees in some cases, it hasn't been able to accept them.

One irony is that several major pieces of legislation, such as the Water Pollution Control Act and the Clean Air Act, contain specific provision for the awarding of fees to groups which successfully sue the government, but until the IRS gets around to issuing its guidelines, public-interest law groups can't take advantage of the provisions.

The grants announced last month by the Ford Foundation provide $1,096,000 to the Center for Law and Social Policy, $230,000 to the Citizens Communications Center, $800,000 to the Natural Resources Defense Council, and $192,000 to the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund.

Navy May Drop Sanguine

The environmentalist movement appears to have scored a knockout against the Navy's Project Sanguine, the itinerant effort to take over 3000 acres someplace or other to implant an underground wire grid for generating low-frequency radio transmissions to submarines.

The Navy, which has deemed the project highly essential, initially selected a site in Wisconsin, but was forced to move on when environmentalists and their Congressional friends there aroused public opinion about the possible menace of all that electricity in the earth. Studies financed by the Navy disputed the existence of any hazard, but the project was declared unwelcome, and the Navy then picked out a site in Michigan. When similar opposition arose there, the Navy moved on to Texas in the expectation of receiving a friendlier reception there. The Texans, however, were no better disposed than the others to the electrification of nearby territory.

While the struggle was going on last year, Congress cut in half the Navy's request for $16 million for research on Sanguine, but the Navy, in anticipation of eventually getting the full sum, went on spending at a rate that exceeded money in hand.

Last month, however, with funds exhausted and the opposition as adamant as ever, the Navy said it would suspend further work for the remainder of this fiscal year. which ends June 30. It added that it would seek another $13 million for next year. but if denied the funds—which seems to be the likely outcome—would terminate Project Sanguine.

EPA Research Chief Quits over Nixon Policies

Concerned at the battering that environmental regulations have been taking since the energy crisis grabbed the spotlight, Stanley M. Greenfield, director of research and development in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has decided to quit the government to set up his own consulting agency on the West Coast.

Greenfield is the second top EPA official to resign during the past few months in protest over the EPA's fall from grace within the Nixon Administration following the presidentially proclaimed drive for energy self-sufficiency. The other official was Robert Sansom, former assistant EPA administrator for Air and Water Programs, who also quit to set up a consultancy.

Although both Greenfield and the White House are keeping quiet about his resignation, it is common knowledge within EPA that Greenfield is concerned about White House attempts to shove aside the National Environmental Policy Act in regard to energy projects, and to emasculate the Clean Air Act in response to strong pressure from the energy industry.

Nixon is always careful to pay lip service to the need to develop energy sources in line with environmental standards whenever he makes a statement on the energy crisis, but his rhetoric has been matched by consistent White House attempts to push aside some of the nation's more effective environmental laws, often without bothering even to consult the EPA on the matter.

Showing a degree of independence which wouldn't have been tolerated in the days when Nixon was less preoccupied with his own survival, EPA Administrator Russell Train has been fighting the White House line in public, and this has contributed to Congress's unwillingness so far to sanction some of the more damaging White House proposals. But Greenfield is concerned about the prospects of a gradual chipping away of the environmental goals which were established just a few years ago, when purity came cheap.

Generally regarded as an effective administrator of EPA's research programs, Greenfield has, ironically, benefited greatly from the Administration's reaction to the energy crisis. The EPA's budget includes $186 million for energy-related R&D in fiscal 1975, for example, which is more than double the agency's entire research budget this year.

But in other areas EPA's research office is slated for little more than a cost of living increase, and Greenfield has been promoting research on the health effects of environmental chemicals, partly at the expense of subjects such as water pollution.

Also looming on the horizon is the prospect that the proposed Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) will strip away much of EPA's energy-related research projects when it is finally established. A bill to establish ERDA has already been approved by the House, and it is now moving toward a vote in the Senate.

Greenfield is concerned that some of the programs in the energy field which have implications for other EPA activities will be lost to ERDA, but EPA is now engaged in behind-the-scenes negotiations to decide what is to be transferred when ERDA is established. It's too early, however, yet to foresee the final settlement.

In Print

Listed are recent publications of more than routine interest.

An Analysis of Federal R&D Funding by Function, 1969-74, third in a series of NSF reports that assesses government R&D support in terms of function, rather than the traditional agency-by-agency budgets. Among the major findings: civilian research grew by an annual average of 9.1 percent over the five-year period, while national security programs rose by 2.4 percent, and space declined 8 percent. "Nonetheless, national security remains the leading function by a wide margin," the analysis states, "accounting for more than one-half of the overall federal R&D effort each year—an estimated 54.2 percent in 1974." (NSF Publication 73-316, 67 pages, $1.90, US Government Printing Office, Wash., D.C. 20402.)

Science and Engineering Careers—A Bibliography, published by the Scientific Manpower Commission to provide career guidance for students. (48 pages, $2, SMC, 1776 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Wash., D.C. 20036.)

Graduate Science Education, Student Support and Postdoctorals, Fall 1972, prepared by NSF, a bit behind the times, but contains the latest comprehensive data on how many are studying what, where, and how it's paid for. (NSF Publication 73-315, 184 pages, $2.85, US Government Printing Office, Wash., D.C. 20402.)

Women in Science and Technology; A Report on an MIT Workshop, cites a variety of factors, beginning with parental attitudes, that discourage women from pursuing careers in science and engineering; urges particular emphasis to preparation in mathematics. (55 pages, $2, Room 10-140, MIT, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.)

Slammed Doors Send Pollsters to NSF for Aid

The National Science Foundation has signalled its interest in supporting research aimed at reducing the growing incidence of slammed doors encountered by the booming opinion-polling industry.

The rise of "incompletions" in polling operations—by government, academic, and private organizations—is not readily perceptible to the general populace, which is regularly barraged with reports of the findings of this or that poll. But the survey fraternity, which meets under the banner of the American Statistical Association (ASA), has noted with alarm in recent years that increasing numbers of citizens prefer not to part with information about themselves and their opinions. With the backing of about $25,000 from NSF, the decline in public cooperation was examined at two separate ASA conferences in 1973 and again last March, with the findings and recommendations of last year's sessions published in the February issue of *The American Statistician*, under the title of "Report on the ASA Conference on Surveys of Human Populations."

The report indicates that all is not well for the bellringing clipboard set, though there was little agreement as to how serious the problem is or why it has arisen. Reading between the lines, however, one gets the impression that a "none-of-your-business" syndrome accounts for a good many of the incompletions, since the US Bureau of the Census, which most citizens apparently regard as an acceptable intrusion of government, reports few encounters with "refusals to answer the questionnaire." Refusals, "not-at-homes" and other causes still leave the Census Bureau with a 95-96 percent completion rate; similar figures were reported by the Health Interview Survey of the National Center for Health Statistics.

It's the private and academic pollsters—whose subjects range from breakfast juices to saleable political poses—who appear to be having the most trouble.

In contrast to the federal surveys, the ASA report states, "spokesmen for a number of private survey organizations, large and small, who were queried by one of the conference participants, all report that their completion rates on general population samples now average approximately 60 to 65 percent, in spite of three or four call backs. This recent experience is in contrast to a completion figure of 80 to 85 percent for the same firms in the decade of the sixties. The remaining 35 to 40 percent non-response divides about equally between refusals and not-at-homes."

Some participants in the conferences took the view that growth of the working population and the

(Continued on page 6.)

Commerce Setting Up OTA-Style Analysis Staff

An inhouse "think-tank" operation that curiously resembles Congress's Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) is included in next year's Department of Commerce budget, though officials there say that while Commerce will house and pay for the staff, it will actually work for the Office of Management and Budget, the Domestic Council, and the Council of Economic Advisers.

Budgeted for $1 million and a staff of 25, the new group will be known as the Domestic and International Business (DIB) Policy Analysis Staff. Paul O'Day, acting deputy assistant secretary for DIB, told SGR that the staff "will not be technologically oriented," and that it will mainly be concerned with studying such problems as "labor-management relations, pensions, and insurance" for OMB and the councils.

But minutes of the March meeting of the Commerce Technical Advisory Board show that when O'Day was questioned about the Department's "role in longterm planning with technological assessment, he said there is really no such activity in Commerce at the present time. He noted that the DoC (Department of Commerce) '75 budget calls for the formation of a 25-man Domestic Business Policy Analysis Staff which promises to assume that role. This group would be housed in Commerce," the minutes paraphrase him as saying, "but directed by OMB."

What's involved here may be no more than a bit of innocent growth at Commerce, but OTA's blossoming on Capitol Hill with Edward M. Kennedy at its helm has evoked a few concerned twitches at the White House. In the ranking of matters of concern to the Administration at the moment, OTA is, of course, relatively minor. Nevertheless, with Nixon having abolished the White House Office of Science and Technology, and there being considerable speculation that OTA's creation signified the swing of science-policy influence to the Congress, it is not beyond the realm of plausibility that the White House decided to react by staffing up and assigning the cost to Commerce.

Interior Department Turns Against Plowshare

The Atomic Energy Commission's much troubled scheme to use nuclear explosives to blast natural gas out of deposits deep underneath the Rocky Mountains has hit yet another snag. The Department of Interior has now publicly stated its opposition to the scheme and it will almost certainly try to stop the AEC conducting any further tests of the nuclear fracturing technique.

The idea of firing off thousands of nuclear explosives under the Rockies has already run into a slew of opposition and the most recent test of the technique has turned out to be something of a failure (SGR, Vol. IV, No. 8). Thus, a formal attack by the Department of Interior could well put an end to the entire scheme.

Interior's opposition is outlined in a letter to the General Accounting Office (GAO), parts of which were printed in a GAO report published last month. The letter charges that firing off underground nuclear explosives in the Rocky Mountains would kill plans to exploit the potentially lucrative oil shale deposits which lie immediately above the gas-bearing sandstone.

The letter said that "nuclear fracturing of the gas sands underlying the oil shale should not be conducted prior to, or concurrent with oil shale mining," and it went on to suggest that the scheme should be called off before any more experimental blasts are conducted because "detonation of (nuclear) devices may result in the waste of valuable oil shale resources."

There has always been strong opposition within Interior to plans for firing off nuclear explosives in oil shale territory, even though AEC steadfastly maintains that they will do no damage to oil shale mining. But Interior officials, in deference to the Administration's drive for energy self-sufficiency, have grudgingly gone along with previous plans to test the technique, although they have privately hoped that the scheme would be halted before it could be carried out on a commercial scale.

Asked why the Department of Interior has now decided to make its opposition public, an official there told SGR "I don't know why there's been this pussyfooting around. We have felt this way for some time, and we thought it's time we aired the situation."

Copies of the report, "Progress and Problems In Developing Nuclear and Other Experimental Techniques for Recovering Natural Gas in the Rocky Mountain Area", No. B-164105, can be obtained for $1, from the GAO, Washington, D.C. 20548.

(Continued from page 5.)

use of less-experienced pollsters accounted for much of the increase in incompletions . But the report notes that others believed that "Growth in refusals and the less tangible phenomenon, resistance, is in fact the more general case. In any event, agreement is almost total that achievement of a given sample survey completion rate has become more difficult and therefore more costly. . ."

Speculating on possible causes, the conferees stated, "It is also plain that much so-called survey research has addressed trivial problems of negligible importance either to society in the large or to the particular persons acting as respondents. Consequently, a view of survey research as an exploitative enterprise in practice may have a good measure of justification. Add to this the fact that unscrupulous individuals and organizations can under the guise of conducting a legitimate survey use the procedures for biased and even nefarious purposes, and the problem is doubly serious."

Last year's conferences concluded with recommendations that "a small, fulltime research staff"—presumably paid for by NSF—be established to study the problem; it was also recommended that "professional associations. . .might even go so far as to develop films explaining what survey research really is, how it is used, and for what kinds of purposes."

NSF was unresponsive to these suggestions. Instead, it invited the ASA to formulate research aimed at determining how serious the problem really is. According to an NSF official, plans are yet to be completed, but it was his expectation that a suitable study will be supported, will cost at least $150,000 a year, and would probably run for two years.

. . . .*But House is Still for It*

The Department of Interior's opposition to the AEC's nuclear gas stimulation program has failed to cut much ice with the House of Representatives, for last week, the House soundly defeated an amendment to the AEC authorisation bill which would have deleted virtually all the funds from the agency's budget for its peaceful nuclear weapons program.

Offered by Rep. Teno Roncalio (D-Wyo.), a second term Congressman and a member of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE), the amendment would have left only a few thousand dollars in the Plowshare Program for evaluation of the Rio Blanco test short which took place in Colorado last year. The JCAE itself has recommended, however, that the Plowshare Program should not be expanded into areas other than gas stimulation.

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Nuclear Safety: AEC Says, "Don't Worry."

While many specialists remote from the ranks of nuttiness are raising serious questions about the adequacy of safeguards against the diversion of nuclear materials, the Atomic Energy Commission continues to advise the public that the doubters are cranks and the problem is well in hand.

Typical of the AEC line is a talk delivered by Commissioner William E. Kriegsman, who described the subject of safeguards as "a gray area, beset by myths and half-truths and ill-defined fears."

No amount of safeguards can wholly eliminate the hazard, he told a conference of the Atomic Industrial Forum on March 20 in New Orleans. Rather, the goal should be "to reduce the possible danger, not eliminate it." Kriegsman, however, indicated that, despite the unique catastrophe that might ensue from a successful diversion, "In general, the costs that society will bear for safeguards of special nuclear materials can be expected to be consistent with costs society bears for protecting itself from other dangerous commodities." A prime objective, he said, should be the avoidance of "unreasonable cost" in providing safeguards.

"It seems counterproductive to me," he continued, "to spend our time attempting to design safeguards in response to every threat which might be dreamed up by the press or individuals who wish to spend time attempting to incite the uninformed public as to the dangers of having the material around, or in attempting to identify or classify every possible threat before one feels they can design an effective system."

Since the actions of terrorists are unpredictable, he said, the defense calls for making it difficult to get at the material—through such devices as secure packaging methods, alarms, and systems for incapacitating intruders—rather than by trying to foresee all possible scenarios.

With the AEC talking that way, industry, which must bear most of the safeguards costs, has naturally taken up the same theme. For example, Robert V. Curry, executive vice president of Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc., takes the position that "The theft of a significant quantity of concentrated waste fission products is simply not credible, as far as I am concerned, nor is the idea of dispersing a significant amount of radioactivity into the public areas by an act of sabotage in a reprocessing plant."

The undertones of complacency and the quest for safeguards at bargain-basement prices are reminiscent of the Nixon Administration's policies toward energy research prior to the oil embargo. It may be assumed that after the first nuclear hijacking occurs, the Administration will set in motion a crash program for devising safeguards, and that whoever is President then, will assure the public that everyone possible is being done to avoid a repetition.

HEW Amends Regulations On Sterilization

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has quietly amended its regulations governing the use of federal funds for sterilization operations to bring them into line with a court ruling that the government has no right to support sterilization of minors or mentally incompetent people (SGR, Vol. IV, No. 7).

The new regulations, published in the April 16 *Federal Register*, would allow federal funds to be used for nontherapeutic sterilization operations only on legally competent persons and, in response to a number of allegations that people on welfare have been blackmailed into being sterilized, the regulations also require that anybody who agrees to undergo a sterilization operation must sign a consent form with the following statement printed prominently on the top:

"Your decision at any time not to be sterilized will not result in the withdrawal or witholding of any benefits provided by programs or projects."

Meanwhile, NIH is now studying some 500 comments it has received on proposed regulations governing a related issue — the use of children, prisoners and the mentally infirm as experimental subjects (SGR. Vol. III, No. 21). NIH officials concerned with those regulations estimate that it will be several months before they will be put into final form.

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Cancer Institute Expands Contract Research

The National Cancer Institute has announced two major additions to its contract research operations, one of them a $6.6-million award to a management firm that is to take over prime responsibility for all other commercial contractors that NCI has hired to work on studies of cancer causation. An NCI announcement described the arrangement as "one of the first in which a large portion of a research program will be managed by a non-federal institution."

The $6.6 million contract, second only to the $10.2 million that NCI awarded last year to Litton Bionetics for the operation and management of the Frederick Cancer Research Center, was awarded to Tracor Jitco, Inc., a subsidiary of Tracor, Inc., of Austin, Texas. Described as the Sciences and Systems Group of the parent firm, Tracor Jitco has performed management work for the federal government in a variety of fields, and is involved in the parent firm's $4.5 -million-a-year contract for management of the Navy's Polaris submarine sonar program.

Beginning this month, according to NCI, Tracor Jitco "will eventually assume prime contractor responsibility for all NCI contracts now in effect with commercial laboratories for cancer causation. These contracts will be phased into its management operation at the rate of one a month. . .As the NCI contracts expire, the prime contractor will negotiate each of them as a subcontract."

Compensation for Tracor Jitco, the announcement stated, will be on a cost-plus, "award-fee" basis, "in which the amount of profit depends upon the excellence of performance."

The second award, totaling $3,794,147, went to Battelle Memorial Institute's Columbus Laboratories, "for evaluating the safety and side-effects of potential new anti-cancer drugs." Under the contract, Battelle-Columbus "will establish a network of subcontracting laboratories, the number depending on the availability of new drugs for toxicology testing." The announcement said that the program will be managed by Battelle-Columbus from its toxicology program office in McLean, Va., but that NCI's Laboratory of Toxicology "will monitor the contractor's performance and continue to be responsible for critical decisions."

The contract gives Battelle-Columbus "all allowable direct costs as well as overhead and general administrative expenses. In addition, the contract includes a two-year base fee of $65,592 and an award fee that could reach a total of $149,004. . ."

News of these awards is likely to arouse still further anxiety in the academic research community, which has long protested NCI's reliance on contracts as undercutting high-quality, peer-reviewed awards.

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In response to inquiries from librarians and readers interested in obtaining past volumes of SGR, we are pleased to announce that orders can now be filled, dating back to the start of publication, February 1971.

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